



20

## Local artist reaches out to Alzheimer's community

PotentialZ  
– Expressive Arts for Alzheimer's and Dementia is a unique program designed specifically for those with memory impairments. Based on the Museum of Modern Art's "Meet me at MoMA" program, it seeks to make art accessible to those with dementia.

A typical "Traveling Museum" program will feature four or five pieces of artwork. The facilitator engages the participants by incorporating art history, reminiscence, poetry, storytelling and song that tie into the pictures' theme.

The program offers a safe environment for participants to give their opinion of what they see or feel when looking at a painting.

PotentialZ was created by Mary Alice Landry, who has a bachelor's in Fine Arts/Design and in 2010 returned to school to pursue Therapeutic Recreation. She now offers PotentialZ at skilled nursing and assisted living facilities.

"It becomes an amazing process when something as simple as a painting can open up a door to the participant's past," she says.

For more information, contact Landry at [potentialz@att.net](mailto:potentialz@att.net) or visit the website, [www.potentialz.org](http://www.potentialz.org).

# TIPS FOR PERFORMING ARTISTS

## Building an audience for live music in Montana

By Steve Eckels

I recently visited Denton, TX, and was impressed by the number of musicians performing at local restaurants and coffee houses. It was natural for me to make the comparison to where I live, here in Kalispell. At first, I attributed the flourishing live music scene in Denton to the warm weather, the layout of the town with a thriving central-square, and to the fact that there are several universities located in the area.

While these factors do play a role in the success of live music, there are other factors involved as well. What follows is what I have learned over the years, and is what I am doing to promote my new steady engagement at the Rising Sun Bistro (formerly the Knead Cafe) in Kalispell. The engagement will last for at least six months and is every Wednesday from 6-8 p.m.

• **Repertoire:** The first thing to consider is the development of a repertoire that fits the venues in your region. Most likely, a smaller group or soloists will work best. Also, Montana audiences are well educated and sophisticated. They attend concerts by the local symphony and by college and school ensembles. They expect quality.

Out of respect for this sophistication, I have spent the last four years developing a repertoire of original music, with classical aesthetics, in a popular style. I feel strongly enough about this music to "go out on a limb" to promote it. I have patiently and carefully prepared a high-level presentation, and am ready to make an investment in time and effort to promote it.

• **Venue:** Next, consider finding a restaurant or coffee house that is a good match for your music. Will the acoustics make it feasible to hear the music? Many venues are too loud and reverberant to support live music. Is there appropriate light? How is the performance area located in proximity to the audience?



Guitarist Steve Eckels

• **The long term:** One of the reasons for the success of the music in Denton is that the public knows what and where things are happening. Live music is ingrained into the community consciousness. For example, every Wednesday people can hear country music at one venue, or every Friday they can hear jazz at another.

Public awareness is the result of a long-term initiative, not a single night engagement. The public needs to know that music of a high quality is happening at a dependable time and place.

• **Publicity:** It is not the responsibility of the establishment to promote the music. Therefore the artist must make a commitment to provide professional publicity. This means taking advantage of all free listings, making and keeping posters up, and announcing the engagement at other concerts and events.

In my case, I have a list of about six

sources of free listings, a list of public bulletin boards for posters, and a list of networks that I belong to. I will be placing posters where people connected with the local symphony, chorale, schools and colleges, and churches will see them. I will ask supporters to help with the word-of-mouth marketing.

• **Money:** Restaurants and coffee houses can only stay in business if they make a profit. The role of live music is to bring more customers and money in the door. It is important to propose a fee to the venue that reduces or eliminates the risk to their bottom line.

Start with your bare minimum and if you prove that you can bring in a profit, you can gradually raise the price. I am starting out with \$40 per night for a two-hour performance, plus tips, food, and permission to sell recordings. After six months, based on the success of Wednesday evenings, the fee may be renegotiated.

• **Consider the fringe benefits:** The financial remuneration is only one factor in my decision to invest in a long-term engagement. Public performance is an opportunity to sharpen my skill in front of a live audience and to have my name constantly appearing in the publicity. It is also a good place to meet people who may be sponsoring special events in the future and who will hire me at my professional rate.

In my case, I will also be able to meet and visit with the parents and students in an atmosphere outside of the schools where I teach.

Success does not happen without effort, commitment, realism and skill. I hope that I have outlined some of the steps that you can take to improve your performing career in your chosen area. Good luck.

**Steve Eckels is the guitar instructor for Kalispell Public Schools and currently performs 6-8 p.m. Wednesdays at the Rising Sun Bistro in Kalispell. You may reach him at [eckels@guitarmusicman.com](mailto:eckels@guitarmusicman.com), [www.guitar-musicman.com](http://www.guitar-musicman.com) or at 406-257-6878.**

## Helpful hints for performing-arts showcase artists

Flathead Valley musician John Dunnigan has participated in a slew of performing arts showcases over the years, including the Montana Performing Arts Consortium (MPAC), The Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs, The Washington Fair Association, The National Association for Campus Activities, the Wyoming Arts Council and the National School Assembly Association.

A showcase offers performers a brief window of opportunity (usually 10-20 minutes) to woo an audience comprised of arts presenters. Dunnigan offers the following helpful hints for performers:

**1. By far the biggest mistake I see is people showcasing a particular song, trick, or act for too long.** I've seen bands play one song that lasted seven minutes!

- Do snippets of your best material.
- Do a variety of your best stuff.
- Do medleys!
- Don't play "Stairway to Heaven" in its entirety!

**2. Think about the audience you will be playing for.** I've seen bands play "late night bar songs" for the fair crowd, when, if hired, they'll be performing at 11 a.m. on a free stage!

**3. Keep it light and upbeat.**

**4. Realize that the sound quality will not be the best.** The sound company is doing different acts every 10-20 minutes, so just smile and look like a pro. Chances are the audience has no idea that there are any sound issues.

**5. Leave them wanting more.** If the showcase is 12 minutes, do 11; if it's 20, perform for 18. Do NOT go over your allotted time!



Musician and showcase veteran John Dunnigan

**6. Performers, please have a short and legible introduction typed in LARGE font that tells the audience about the act.**

I've been an emcee many, many times and know from experience that a good intro can really propel the act as it is introduced. One that is too long will only confuse the emcee and bore the audience.

### MPAC conference is Jan. 25-27 in Great Falls

The Montana Performing Arts Consortium hosts its annual Performing Artists' Showcase and Block Booking Conference, Jan. 25-27 at the Mansfield Performing Arts Center in Great Falls. The showcase is Saturday, and offers

an opportunity for artists to reach presenters who do not attend large national booking conferences.

Approximately 20 presenting organizations in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho are expected to attend the MPAC conference, which several artists have described as the "most humane and fun booking conference in the country."

For more details, email [info@mt-performingarts.org](mailto:info@mt-performingarts.org) or call 406-585-9551.

### Correction on "Literary Landscapes" essay

The story on page 8 of the November/December issue of *State of the Arts*, "Historical Literary Figures east of the Continental Divide" by Tami Haaland, was missing its last line. The final paragraph should read:

"We can see shadows of current patterns in the stories of the past. And, likewise, through this investigation communities might come to recognize that their literary present is soon to be their literary past, and individuals and groups might take up the enjoyable pursuit of mining this legacy for the gems it has to offer."

Our apologies to Tami and our readers.

Read the complete essay at [svcalt.mt.gov/art/soa/](http://svcalt.mt.gov/art/soa/).